



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

Success stories

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

A Canadian case study in diversity and inclusion

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TTC: A Canadian success story in diversity and inclusion

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Thanks to Karen Kuzmowich, Manager of Diversity at the TTC for talking with us.

About the TTC

The Toronto Transit Commission (the “TTC”) has been celebrated as a trailblazer in diversity and inclusion. The organization operates and maintains a public transit system within and around the City of Toronto, and has fostered a culture of diversity and inclusion that immeasurably impacts the services it provides.

Established in 1920, the organization has expanded to a multi-modal transit agency that operates bus, subway trains, streetcars and paratransit services. With an ever-growing user base, the TTC remains the most used transit system in Canada and one of the three busiest systems in North America.

Governed by progressive leadership, the TTC serves the people of Toronto by ensuring the transit system is reliable, safe, and prepared for the future.

Karen Kuzmowich, Manager of Diversity, was interviewed to provide deeper insight on the diversity and inclusion initiatives at the TTC.

Diversity and Inclusion at the TTC

In 2015, the TTC created a two-year diversity and inclusion corporate plan to provide a framework to systematically advance diversity and inclusion initiatives in a coordinated manner. Recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion, the TTC has weaved initiatives and objectives throughout the organization to ensure inclusivity is a key component across all areas of TTC’s business. The TTC commits to:

- Attracting and retaining a qualified workforce that reflects the diverse population it serves.
- Creating and fostering an environment which eliminates barriers to participation for employees and customers.
- Creating inclusive policies, programs and services that meet the diverse needs of its business, employees, and customers.
- Creating and fostering a harassment and discrimination free workplace, and providing workplace accommodation pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code and TTC’s corporate policies.

To support diversity and inclusion, the TTC strives to exceed best practices by:

- Conducting outreach, partnerships, internships and placement programs for diverse job applicants;
- Developing, supporting and creating an inclusive environment for employees through employee development programs and rewards and recognition programs;
- Providing employees with education and training on diversity and inclusion, accessibility and human rights;
- Delivering inclusive and accessible services for customers through TTC's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Status Reports; and
- Participating in external community events and charitable initiatives to support the City of Toronto's diverse communities.

The TTC has been recognized by Canadian HR Reporter and Thomson Reuters Canada for having the Best Diversity Program at the National HR Awards. Recently, other areas of recognition include:

- TTC tripled recruitment outreach to attract diverse job applicants;
- TTC awarded 43% more internships and job placements to students;
- 27.3% of senior management positions are held by women (higher than the Toronto benchmark standard);
- Half of the executive team are women, demonstrating the TTC's strides toward breaking the glass ceiling;
- TTC rolled out a specialized leadership training program for its 1,450 managers and executives, to deepen understanding of inclusive leadership skills unconscious biases, cultural competency, and diversity and inclusion.

With the goal of embedding diversity and inclusion into all aspects of its business, the TTC developed the Diversity and Inclusion Lens and Toolkit to promote better decision and policy making, and to produce more inclusive and equitable outcomes for employees and customers.

Zooming in on the TTC's Diversity and Inclusion Lens and Toolkit

The lens is used as a framework to guide employees and managers to consider diversity and inclusion in their day-to-day work. It helps everyone to see things from perspectives different than their own, and consider the impacts of decisions on diverse employees and customers. The lens allows leaders to take a proactive approach to consider all respective groups to support inclusivity while rolling out new projects and providing services. Project leaders are prompted to conduct research, consult advisors and perform assessments to identify the potential impacts and the steps that can be taken to eliminate or reduce any possible risk, negative impacts or unintended barriers.

This lens is applied to all areas of TTC's business, be that communications, hiring and promotion, customer service, policy and procedures development, or program and services development. The toolkit complements the lens as a more thorough checklist, prompting workers to consider diversity and inclusion through all aspects of the proposed project or new service. Based on the results of the checklist, workers can visibly identify whether a proposal can be deemed inclusive or not. The Diversity & Inclusion Lens and Toolkit supports the TTC in achieving its goal to make diversity and inclusion a fundamental part of its business.

Case Study: Wheel-Trans Transformation Program

Karen Kuzmowich provided an example of one case where the Diversity and Inclusion Lens & Toolkit was applied to program redevelopment. TTC's Wheel-Trans service provides specialized accessible transportation to persons with disabilities who may not be able to access TTC's conventional fixed-route services. Traditionally, Wheel-Trans eligibility was based on a person's physical mobility. In 2016, TTC embarked on a Wheel-Trans Transformation Program, to expand its service and extend its eligibility criteria to any person who has a disability that prevents them from taking conventional transit for all or part of their trip, in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Karen recounts the TTC began in 2016 collaborating with customers, City Councillors, community members and other stakeholders, including disability organizations and advocacy groups, to launch the multi-stage redevelopment. Transforming the traditional Wheel-Trans program into a service that considers all persons with disabilities, including cognitive, mental health and sensory, involved revamping the eligibility, application, assessment and appeal process. TTC applied the Diversity and Inclusion Lens and Toolkit, to ensure this transformation was inclusive.

"We knew the proposed application forms and new eligibility and appeal process would have to be reviewed," says Karen. "The Lens prompted us to consider the different ability levels, age, income and socio-economic levels, and language and literacy levels of potential applicants, which in turn influenced the content, layout and requirements of the forms." This meant longer more conventional forms were shortened to facilitate the application process for all applicants. "The Lens really led us to deeply assess all considerations," says Karen. "Our goal was to eliminate as many possible barriers as we could."

Working towards making the forms available in accessible formats was another consideration, as was ensuring the application process did not create disadvantages for individuals accessing benefits under the program. This meant avoiding requirements for applicants to submit materials within very short timeframes, pick-up or drop-off forms in person, or attend a TTC location that is not yet accessible. "As much as possible," Karen says "the team tried to facilitate the application process by providing support yet still allowing applicants to maintain their independence. The feedback has been extremely positive, and customers are very pleased with the results."

Karen tells us that TTC is pleased to have removed barriers with the Wheel-Trans program; but acknowledges that diversity and inclusion initiatives must continue to evolve and advance to meet the needs of its customers. Still, the robust and ever-developing program at the TTC is exemplary of forward thinking and inclusivity, and a celebrated model for all Canadian companies to aspire towards.

The Success Story Initiative

There is astonishingly little published that shines a light on diversity and inclusion successes in Canada, though there are many, across a wide range of organizations. Case studies referenced by trainers and leadership tend to be reporting on different countries, cultures, political and economic settings.

The goal of this initiative is to support diversity and inclusion leadership with stories that are relevant to what's happening now, here in Canada. By sharing their stories, we celebrate the successes of Canadian organizations while contributing to learning for everyone that cares about diversity and inclusion.

The employers who have developed initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion as priorities in the workplace are responding to an increasingly competitive economy that's responsive to the diversity of employees – and the country. We are grateful to those who have participated in interviews.

This series of case studies will be published monthly through 2016. Subscribing to our monthly newsletter at ccdi.ca will keep you updated with the latest case studies, which will all be posted online at ccdi.ca/successstories. For more information, contact mail@ccdi.ca.

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

The CCDI has a mission to help the organizations we work with be inclusive, free of prejudice and discrimination – and to generate the awareness, dialogue and action for people to recognize diversity as an asset and not an obstacle.

Through the research, reports and toolkits we develop and our workshops, events and workplace consultations, we're helping Canadian employers understand their diversity, plan for it and create inclusion.

CCDI's leadership has a proven model that's cultivated trust as an impartial third party. Our expertise is focused on the topics of inclusion that are relevant in Canada now and the regional differences that shape diversity.

A charitable organization that thinks like a business, we have created a niche with our innovative research technology and data analysis that brings a deeper understanding of Canadian diversity demographics and mindsets at any given moment.

CCDI is grateful for the support of Employer Partners across Canada. For enquiries, contact Susan Rogers, Chief Client Officer, Susan.Rogers@ccdi.ca or (416) 968-6520, ext 103.

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